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THE UNION, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE LAWS.

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. JOHN J. CRITTENDEN,

AT LOUISVILLE, KY.,

ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 2, 1860.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE

NATIONAL UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Mr. CRITTENDEN said: It is thought, ladies and gentlemen, and I hope it may be so, that without the formality of an introduction I may venture to address myself to you as one who is not altogether unknown in this city. It is by an urgent request, fellow-citizens, that I obtrude myself on your attentiou on this occasion. I do not seek opportunities of speaking—it has become rather irksome, and although compelled to observe the course of politics and take an interest in them, it is a subject on which I have long since been fully satisfied. I am no orator, nor have I any pretentions to advise you, but I have no opinions that I care to conceal, and when it is the wish and pleasure of my countrymen to hear me on any subject of public concern, I feel some difficulty in refusing compliance. It is in obedience to such a request that I now appear before you for the purpose of addressing you on a subject with which, I am sure, you are already quite familiar.

The political occurrences of our time have been of a character to strike so deeply into the public mind that there is scarce one so unobservant as not to be familiar with them. I fear that I can say nothing calculated either to interest or to instruct you.

Fellow-citizens, great questions are now pending, and great events depend upon their issue. A Presidential election always involves, to no inconsiderable extent, the public welfare and the progress of our Government; and the importance of the struggle increases in proportion to the character of the times, and the character of the questions depending before the people at the moment. Perhaps there has been no time past when questions of a more critical character were depending than those which are now before the people.

You have before you a variety of candidates unknown on any former occasion, and these are, to some extent, brought before you by the variety and interest of the questions involved. I have it particularly at heart to make known to you the principles of this new party which has recently sprung into existence, and which has placed before you its candidates for your judgment and election—I mean, of course, the Constitutional Union Party, and their candidates, Bell and Everett.—(Cheers.)

Fellow-citizens, it was a high public necessity, a great exigency in public affairs, that forced this party into existence. What, last winter, was the state of our country? Two great parties seemed to occupy the whole country. There was no other of sufficient importance to attract the least public attention. Those parties were sweeping or in a fierce contention that involved every public interest on one side or the other. What was the character of the question, what was the subject about which those great parties were marshalling their hosts and preparing for a great encounter in the approaching Presidential election? One of those parties was the Democratic, and the other the Republican party. The question debated before them, was that most exciting of all questions—the question of slavery. This was conducted between them not with the temperance that marks the discussion and settlement of ordinary political questions, but with the fierceness of enemies; and the question involved not merely the fate of parties, but the fate of the country. Union and Disunion were involved in the question. What good could possibly come of such a contest? There was danger enough in it, but no good to the country could be hoped for. The one party must necessarily be conqueror, and the other be trampled into the dust. Victory to the one was proscription to the other, which threatened by resistance and force of arms to oppose the exercise of the powers of government. This was the prospect. There were thousands of men everywhere who looked with concern, and, I may say, apprehension and awe, to the result of such a contest. What should they do? To join one or the other of these parties was to mingle in the conflict and in the evil. The only way was to stand forth like men and form another party; to form a party for the country; to form a party that would stand between these two hostile parties and prevent, as far as possible, any collision between them which might prove dangerous to the country; and, if it could not succeed, if it should even be scattered between the opposing hosts of sectionalism in their mighty conflict, it would yet break the shock of the encounter, and save the country. It might be that the presence of such a party appearing in the field of contest—calm, patriotic, with suitable and proper representatives at its head—would make such an appeal to the sense and patriotic feeling of the country as would draw aside these combatants—draw them to a patriotic standard, and unite them together and govern the country. This was the object and expectation. It was with these purposes and upon these principles that this Union party sprang into existence and took its place amid the contests of the

partizans. (Applause.) It took its stand between the Democratic and Republican parties. What was the basis upon which it presented itself? It came on no artificial platform. It came with no studied creed. It came upon a great and high principle. In this simple language it was expressed: "The Constitution, the Union, and the Enforcement of the Laws." (Immense cheering.)

These are our principles. We want no platform to captivate or ensnare men. We appeal to them upon the simple principles of patriotism and of self-preservation for their glory and the glory of our land. (Applause.) These are our principles; here are our purposes: To maintain the Constitution which our fathers gave us; to maintain the Union which existed anterior to the Constitution, and which was only confirmed and sanctioned by the Constitution to enforce the laws of our country everywhere. (Applause.) All can understand this. It is a plain enunciation of principles. No subtle discriminations, no dubious resolutions, no ad captandum phrases, no creeds proclaimed to bind the hearts and blind the judgments of men, but principles inherent in the government and common among all the people—"the Union, the Constitution, and the Laws." (Great applause.)

Here is a ground broad enough for you all to stand upon. We come with no old party feuds and accusations. We come as a new party—a party drawing its strength from the Constitution. It has sprung from the bosom of that necessity which seemed to require and demand its interposition for the safety of the country. It came with no accusations, no denunciations. It came as a peace-maker to take its stand upon our own native land, and to implore our brethren of all political parties to cease that destructive struggle in which they seemed about to engage, and to spare their country. We came to make a party for the country; there were parties enough striving for their own interests. We wanted a party to strive for the interests of the country and the whole country. (Applause.) We nominated candidates; they are before us. You know their characters. Men of tried integrity; men of age and experience; men practised in the government for long periods of their lives, and in every branch of it, as Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, as Ministers in the Cabinet, as Foreign Ministers. In all these varied capacities those two gentlemen have officiated, and where are there two men in our country who have come out of these trials with characters more unblemished than theirs. (Prolonged applause.) Who questions their integrity? You have heard none make a question of it.

What is the language employed by the great parties with respect to all the other candidates? I will not repeat it. There is hardly any term of reproach spared them. These other gentlemen stand up in their solitary integrity and purity of character unsullied and unquestioned. (Immense applause.) They come with the Constitution in their hands. They come imploring their brethren to forgive each other, to lay aside their hostilities, to cease those fierce broils that are alienating section from section and men from men.

Let us join hands and be one nation, one great and happy nation. (Applause.) This is the appeal they make to the American people. For itself, the party claims nothing but the character of a mediator, entertaining and cherishing the kindest and most fraternal feelings towards all. This is the character in which it presents itself. I have not, I think, overdrawn its features. I think our party and its candidates deserve all I have said. Compare them with the competitors that are now engaged in fierce contest before you. If Bell and Everett succeed, what is to be the consequence of their administration? Does it not of necessity bring together all parties? How can they, being elected by men from all parties, coming together a mighty host of voters, help saving their country? (Cheers.) It will be a triumph of the country, not the triumph of a party. (Applause.) Who have the Union men to exercise any vengeance upon? Who have they accused? Who have they denounced? As individuals they have their opinions and feelings with respect to all passing public measures and to all present public men, but as a party they are but of yesterday, brought into existence by the country's exigencies, and for the country's preservation. They come as a peacemaker—as a mediator. They have no vengenace to wreak upon any one. Their victory and their triumph shall be the triumph and security of all. (Enthusiastic applause.) This is a victory worth winning. In almost all victories that are gained in civil conflicts, there is as much cause to mourn as to rejoice. If there is one victor there is one conquered man upon whom he treads, and our sympathies are divided between the conqueror and the prostrate man. Ours is a victory free from all such tarnishing reflections. It is one of pure exultation in our country's triumph and in our country's good. (Cheers.)

Look at the other parties and see what must be the consequence of their victory. Suppose the Republicans succeed, what then? Mr. Lincoln may be a very worthy, upright, and honest man. He married a Kentucky girl, and that is a wholesome influence. (Laughter and applause.) I am told he is a Kentuckian himself, which is another salutary fact. Mr. Lincoln may be a very honest, worthy man; but, in a political point of view, he must be regarded as the representative of the party that has made him its leader. He is the Republican leader; and, like all political leaders, he must obey the party that brought him into existence or be put down and crushed out by it. He must be governed by the political influence and voice of his party. Mr. Lincoln is at the head of the great anti-slavery party, a purely sectional party, which, according to all its antecedents, threatens the existence of slavery everywhere; and the apprehension which this threat excites, is increased by the fact, that although the leaders and wise men of that party may not proclaim such sentiments, there are enough among them in their camp who do hold and proclaim such Abolition doctrines as must make every man South feel uneasy in his condition and in his property. The mere fact of Mr. Lincoln's election would be, therefore, a great calamity to the country, though he never should do an act posi-

tively offensive or injurious to any interest of the country. His election would create and continue an alarm that would keep the country agitated and unhappy, if not create an opposition and resistance to the government itself. It is greatly to be desired that he should not be elected. It is hardly necessary to say that we should be forced to apprehend from Mr. Lincoln's election that the impulse which the anti-slavery feeling would receive therefrom would go further than it has yet gone, and create still greater dangers to the peace and security of the South. This pervading apprehension would necessarily make his election a great calamity. It therefore enters into no competition with the election of Messrs. Bell and Everett on the score of beneficence. From them there is nothing to be looked for but peace and security, with all the sanction that a manly, brave, and determined Administration can give to both. (Applause.)

Mr. Douglas and his party come next. You all know, as well as I do, of the rupture that has taken place in the Democratic party, and in its convention assembled for the purpose of nominating candidates for the Presidency. It divided—one party seceded. Mr. Douglas' numerous adherents assembled and nominated him, and the seceders went to a neighboring house and made a nomination. That nomination fell upon a citizen of our own State—Mr. John C. Breckinridge.

Now, what is to be apprehended from Mr. Douglas, if he is elected President? Would not the Breckinridge men continue to make war upon him? Would not the Republicans continue to make war upon him; and, irritated by a common defeat, would they not be apt to form an alliance against the successful rival who had succeeded to the Presidency? Yes, Mr. Douglas would be in a very difficult situation in administering the Government without the support and maintenance to the task. I know Mr. Douglas very well, ladies and gentlemen. From Mr. Douglas personally, I should apprehend no danger. I have never been a Democrat, as you all know. (Applause.) A frank, fair, and honest opponent of the Democratic party, I have ever been found acting upon Whig principles from the first to the last. (Increased applause.) But I have known Mr. Douglas in the public councils, and have acted with him. Although generally opposed, and especially upon party questions, we have at times acted together, and particularly upon one momentous occasion, when we acted together in opposition to that infamous Lecompton Constitution. (Deafening applause.) Mr. Douglas was there making a great sacrifice to his sense of duty. (Applause.) He was sacrificing his connection, on that occasion, with many old political friends; he was breaking up the relations of a long political life; he was sacrificing as flattering prospects for the highest office of the Government as any man in the country had. I fully believe he did what he conceived to be his duty; and, in defiance of all opposition, the rack of the President, offended friends, and open foes, he acted like a man. (Tremendous cheering.) He might have been mistaken in what he did, but that little

diminished the value of the act. He thought he was right, and he knew he was making a sacrifice, and he was capable of making it, when he believed the interests of his country demanded it. (Cheers.) I can have no quarrel with him; he is a Union man. (Cheers.) And a Union man I can always trust, when I believe him to be sincere and in earnest, as I believe Douglas to be. (Continued applause.)

But still this is not the question. Mr. Douglas represents an old party, at feud, in the first instance, with the Republican party, calling forth its bitterest opposition, and now at feud with the Southern wing of his own party that has rejected him for another. His would be an administration of continual conflict. The country could hope for no restoration of peace and good government. He therefore ought not to be preferred, in my judgment, to Bell and Everett. (Cheers.) I have spoken not to compliment Mr. Douglas merely; I have spoken because I desire to give my testimony to his truth. I believe Mr. Douglas to be a patriot, and I know him to be a Union man by all the evidences that one public man can give another of his sentiments. (Applause.) He is a generous, bold man, speaking what he thinks, and doing what he knows to be right. (Repeated applause.) But I am opposed to Mr. Douglas. I am for Bell and Everett. (Immense applause.)

We are now left only to compare Mr. Bell with the third candidate who stands in opposition—Mr. Breckinridge. And here again, as in respect to Mr. Douglas, my objection is not to the candidate as an individual. I should hope that Mr. Breckinridge was not a disunion man. (A voice: Yes, he is.) He ought not to be. He belongs to a tribe of faithful, devoted Union men—the tribe of Kentuckians. (Great applause.) He must have been seduced away from the path of his duty, far from the path in which all the impulses of his blood ought to carry him, if he has become a disunionist. But Mr. Breckinridge has made himself the head of a party. He is part and parcel of the present purposes of that party; and, as in the case of Mr. Lincoln, we must judge of his public course by the party that he consents to represent.

Who are they? There is not a disunionist south of Mason and Dixon's line that I know of who does not belong to that party. (Applause.) We have for a long time heard mutterings of disunion in the South—more than mutterings—more than the whispering of such sentiments. We have seen them proclaimed by high men in high places. We have seen conventions assemble for the purpose of promoting the cause of disunion. We have seen it first assume the character and name of nullification—the State claiming the right to annul the laws passed by the whole people of the United States; to annul acts of Congress—and from that day to this we have seen it assuming one form and another form, one face and another, one pretext and another, by this man and by that man, by conventions assembled for the purpose, by open negotiations carried on between the States, and by public declarations that the movement was postponed because not enough States in the South

could be got to go into the enterprise to make it successful. We have seen all these evidences of a spirit of disunion. It is not material to say now from what causes this spirit has sprung; but let me for a single moment allude to this subject. Why are they for a dissolution of the Union? What harm has this Union done? Wrongs may have been done individuals. They may have received wrongs by unjust legislation upon the part of Congress. Our great men may not have had their fair share of public honors from the hands of the President. They may have received wrongs of this sort, but is the Union the author of such wrongs? What is the remedy which must be sought? It is to turn out of their places in the proper constitutional mode those who have mis-administered the government. The government has done no wrong. The Constitution and the Union have done no wrong. They command equal justice to be done to every man and every State and every section. Their agents may have disobeyed their injunctions, and everything may have been done wrong through individuals, but individuals are amenable. What remedy would the destruction of the Constitution afford? Could they get out of the ruins indemnity for the wrongs on account of which they would tear it down? Could it give any satisfaction? Could it make any atonement? No. And yet by some strange perversity or other their minds have been brought to look upon disunion as a remedy for political wrongs. It has caused none of them; the destruction of it would be a remedy for none, but the greatest of all evils to the people of the United States.

Others have taken a different view of it. They look with disaffection towards the Union, and openly avow it. The ultra Southern States participate in this feeling, and Senators in Congress, men, I know, of character and reputation, espouse the same fatal cause. This is the party of which we may entertain apprehensions that it will effect the dismemberment of the government. Many of its members are noble-spirited gentlemen. It is only upon this one subject they have been misled or have misled themselves. They have been betrayed into this delusion. In all other respects they are generous and of high characters, but the spirit of disunion prevails among them, and it is only the more dangerous when entertained by such men. They openly talk about it; they write about it; they invite it. They have rocked themselves into the belief that the Government must be dissolved. They want to meet the imagined necessity at once; they want to dissolve the Union immediately, to precipitate the people into it. The people are not so far-seeing as they are. The leaders anticipate overt acts on the part of the Republicans, and want now to effect a revolution in the cotton States, and establish a new government. These sentiments pervade the South and make up the body and soul of the party which has nominated our fellow-citizen, Mr. Breckinridge, as its candidate for the Presidency. Is there no danger that by electing him you would give new energy to that destructive impulse, and new power to this disunion sentiment, and to the cause of disunion?

Mr. Breckinridge himself follows in the lead. He is part and parcel of the great party. You see this by his nomination and acceptance of it, and can hence foresee with clearness the disasters that would follow this success. Possibly it may be the policy of those who nominated him to unite Old Kentucky to this new Confederacy. Old Kentucky is quite an important State in this Union. (Applause.) She is in the heart of it—she *is* the heart of it. (Immense enthusiasm.) To obtain her concurrence is of the greatest possible consequence to those who fancy that they can make a Republic in the South more glorious and more prosperous than the great Republic of which we now form a part. Such have been their plans for a long time. Kentucky and Tennessee, which old General Gaines called the two military States of the Union, have lain in the way of that sort of treachery to the Union. (Long and loud applause.) They are two States not easily overcome, and though I would not wish to diminish the honor of Mr. Breckinridge's nomination, as he himself conceives it, yet I imagine there are thousands in the South who would go for Mr. Breckinridge mainly in the hope that it might be the means of annexing Kentucky as a sort of frontier province to this Southern Republic of Cotton States that is to be made. (Cheers and laughter.) If they can bring about that union, if they can bring over old Kentucky and make her an ally of their scheme for the dismemberment of this Confederacy and the erection of a separate Republic, it would be a matter of very little consequence whether Mr. Breckinridge was elected or not. (Continued cheering.) They would rather have Kentucky for their ally than Mr. Breckinridge for their President. (Increased applause.) There is no disunionist in the South who would not make that choice. I fear this. I am a Union man, and particularly jealous of everything that threatens the existence of the Union.

Every one of you, I trust, remembers the farewell address of George Washington. Upon the first dawning of anything like an attempt to alienate one portion of the country from another, he tells us to frown indignantly upon it, and upon the man who shall attempt even to impair the ties which bind us together as one people, and to be zealous and watchful of the Union as the great palladium of our rights. The ground of these suspicions and apprehensions is more clearly discerned every week. I believe it is my duty to have a zealous regard for the safety and preservation of my country and this Union, which I take to be one and the same thing. (Applause.) Old Kentucky has ever been the strongest supporter of this Union, and under no circumstances, I trust, will she ever be seduced from that high character. She is sprung of a noble race, directly from the Revolution that established American liberty. (Applause.) Our soldiers, fresh from the field of war with Great Britain, and immediately after the establishment of independence, sought in this section that bounty land which was all their country had to give in return for their deathless services. Shall we, their children, pull down the work of our fathers with our own sacreligious hands, or see it torn down by others? If an English, a French, a Russian, or

any foreign foe should contemplate the tearing down of this government, would you not shed the last drop of your heart's blood in defence of your noble birth-right? Shall we stand by and see the same thing contemplated, the same work done by our own countrymen? Will you stand by and witness that horrid act performed? Will you allow yourselves to be driven in, or drawn in as accomplices to such an ignominious act? No. Unless Kentuckians have changed their blood, and changed their natures, no such thing can take place. (Repeated applause.)

Fellow-citizens, I think no candid man, upon a fair review of all these parties, and their candidates, and of the vital consequences of the election of one or the other of them, will hesitate to say, that prudence, patriotism, and reason all say, take for your Chief Magistrate John Bell. I hope that will be your judgment; I rejoice to see and understand that it is so.

We have the greatest country upon the face of the earth. Let not our minds be so distracted by mere party strife and confusion, that we shall see our government fall to pieces before our eyes, and sacrifice our country to our party, instead of being ready at all times to sacrifice our party to our country. After we become the slave of party, we dare not, in the presence of any danger to the country, turn our backs to our parties and say, we have a country that demands our services, and to it will we give them. Are we now unable to do this? Have we lost this spirit; has it gone from among us?

Providence has given this great country to us. Our wise and valiant forefathers gave us liberty, and established a government for us. Let us take care of it—take care of the Constitution and the Union. (Applause.) That is all we require. We have before us the prospect of a glory unknown to other nations—a prospect in which our land will become the glory of the earth. Neither Rome, nor any of the great empires of antiquity, or of modern times, can compare with what we shall be at no distant day. We are now thirty millions strong; yet we have been but eighty years in existence as a free nation. From the year 1776 down to the present time, God Almighty has blessed us above all other people, and all other nations. Where shall we be thirty years hence, if such prosperity attends us? A great nation of one hundred million souls, with not enough then to develop all our resources. Every man free to think, free to speak, free to act, free to work. What must this mighty freedom produce with this mighty concurrence of hearts, of heads, of hands! What navies, what armies, what cities! Let us lift ourselves to the contemplation of what our children will be. Shall we not leave them a legacy as great as that our fathers left us? Let the contemplation of the mighty destinies involved in our Confederacy, engage us until we absorb the genius of this Republic and its Constitution. Let it enter into all our motives of public action, that we may no longer be the tools and slaves of parties, of party platforms, and of party conventions.

I do not intend to disparage any party in particular, but have not

your parties and platforms limited the freedom and independence of your intellect and your action? If you are told the convention has done so and so, that points are settled by the Democratic Convention held at Cincinnati or Charleston, do not you, my Democratic friends, hesitate to express the judgment you had formed, do you not hesitate even to think in opposition to party dogmas? This slavery of intellect is in a fearful measure degrading. Without tangible authority, it binds by some mysterious influence you heart, your head, and your conscience. The "regular nominees," the "regular platform"—these are considered as of authority; they have a talismanic influence. You know not whether these conventions to whose rod you humbly submit yourselves, were composed of patriots, pondering the good of the commonwealth, or of knaves, consulting the best policy of robbing it. When we forget our country, and disobey our constitution, we listen to the summons of party. I do not object to party, and the questions of party, so long as they seek to establish no exclusive dominion over the actions and opinions of men, and so long as they leave the people free in the exercise of their judgments. But when we doubt, when we think we see our party is leading us wrong, and that there is a better way to serve our country, every man then ought to have integrity, and heart, and patriotism, and independence enough to act for his country and not for his party. He was made for his country, and let him serve it. His party may be forgotten to-morrow—his country will be remembered forever. (Great applause.) The services he renders his country will be recorded in history; the services he renders his party will be forgotten and trampled in the dust. In the services we render our country, we fulfill the obligations placed upon us by our Maker. The obligation we owe to our father and our mother is a sacred one, but not more sacred than that we owe to our country. Our services to party may be recorded in petty politics. The services rendered by this man, or that man, may be cast up hereafter, and the aggregate sum found to amount to the value of a little post office. Are these motives and considerations worthy of Kentuckians? It is no course of action for you. If I want to appeal to a Kentuckian, I appeal to his home and to his integrity. (Cheers.) These belong to him as a birthright, as an inheritance from his father and his mother. This government was nourished with the blood of the one, and watered with the tears of the other. It cost your mothers more tears than it did your fathers drops of blood to establish this government. It is the recollection of those days which must enter into your nature in order to enable you to fulfill your duty to your country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't pretend to trace the history of these parties very particularly. I appeal to your general knowledge of the case. I have occupied you already longer than I purposed doing, and yet there is one point upon which I would say a word. It is objected to this National, this Constitutional Union party, that it has no platform. I have casually remarked upon platforms before. The want of a platform is the recommendation of our party. I do

not want a party that will cheat. I want not to set up any painted party to attract the people to it by its brilliancy of coloring. The soul of our party is expressed in the simple but grand words: "*The Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of the Laws.*" (Cheers.) What do you want more! Out of the grand principles thus announced you may make as many platforms as you please. Does not this include everything? If the Union is preserved, if the Constitution is observed, if the laws passed by our legislatures are enforced, what more has any citizen a right to ask? Will not his property, whether it consists of slaves or other things, be protected if the laws are enforced? Here is everything you want, expressed not in the gaudy and ostentatious language of parties, but in the simple language of truth. Its very simplicity is its recommendation. It is naked truth in its naked majesty. This is the attraction it has for me, and I trust for you, and for all the people of these States. I want to see one man elected President who, when he comes to take his seat, will have no platform chains upon his wrists and about his neck. But do Presidents mind platforms, if they are not agreeable to them? No. As soon as they get power in their hands, platforms are forgotten; this is ordinarily the case. Let there, then, be no disputing about this feature of the Union party. I want a President elected upon the Constitution; a bold man, who will not fear to perform his duty; a man who cannot be *scared;* a man who loves the Union, the whole Union, and will stand by it and consider it his sacred duty to protect or perish with it. (Applause.)

I know there are those who speculate upon the speedy dissolution of the Union, but they are self-conceited men, unfaithful in their natures, and unfaithful to the great government of which they ought to be proud. They speculate about the destruction of what is as firm and deep as our mountains, and I hope and believe will last about as long. (Applause.) I glory in the thought of leaving to my children and my countrymen so great and grand a country as is this. (Applause.)

Is it not surprising, when the great questions of the advancement of our country by the culture of its citizens, the dissemination of intelligence, and the improvement of our social condition should engage us, that a great body of the people are engaged in quarrelling about the little questions of "intervention" and "non-intertion" in the Territories?

I believe the question is mentioned in all the party platforms. I have a natural aversion to platforms. I hardly ever read a platform in my life, and, when I did, tried to forget it as soon as possible. The Constitution is platform enough for me. The Constitution and a man to represent the people is all the platform that will ever avail us. This question, about which the Democratic party is quarrelling, as I before remarked, is one of the most minute and unimportant questions that can well be imagined. Mr. Douglas says, in substance, that when you have passed a law establishing a Territorial government, when you have delegated to the people the power to regulate their own domestic institutions in their own way, you

have given them power over every subject, as far as you can give it. As for the slavery question, every man has a right to go there with his slaves, but how they must be treated will depend upon the discretion of the Territorial Legislature. It is good policy to leave it to them, for if the nation interfere, its transactions will then become national; it attracts the attention of the whole people; it arouses a national controversy. You want to keep the question of slavery out of Congress; you want to keep it in the Territories, and leave the question there to be settled by Territorial government itself. It is a government not designed to last long; a few years will convert it into a State. It is better to confine the question to these local fields than to convulse the nation with it. It is better to bear the ills that may arise there than flee to greater national ones we know not of. (Applause.)

The other side says: But Congress shall interfere; Congress shall pass laws specially taking the question out of the hands of the Territorial Legislature; it shall pass laws for the protection of special property, laws that are to apply only in our Territories.

This dispute relates entirely to territorial slavery and to territorial remedies. Does it occur to you, that, under the existing circumstances, it makes much difference practically whether Congress shall interfere or whether Congress shall leave it to the Legislature? In Congress this session, where we passed resolutions avowing our mere power over slavery, it was asked, is it necessary now for Congress to interfere? There was no case calling for the interference of such power by special legislation. No Senator would take upon himself the responsibility of proposing any such case, except one, I believe, who ventured to say he thought there was occasion. Southern Senators agreed that there was no cause now existing upon which they would advise legislation; and yet we are quarreling about the degree of power which is to be exercised by Congress, not with respect to any Territories which we now have, but in relation to a case that may arise in some future Territory. None is anticipated in any Territory which we now have to fill. To make it a practical question you have to suppose a future territory of a character to attract slavery; that there shall be an emigration of slaveholders to it; that the Territorial Legislature which assumes to deal with property has committed a flagrant outrage; and that the individual has called upon Congress. These contingencies must all combine, and then and then only do these learned and fierce disputants insist upon the exercise of power by Congress. We have no Territory where such a question can arise. We have not now a single piece of Territory to which slavery would go if it were invited. Why then dispute about a possibility that will probably never arise. They are so impatient with having nothing to do, that they fall to quarreling about what lies in dim futurity, and by speculation raise up in a spirit of discord a possible question which may occur twenty, fifty, or a hundred years hence, or that may never occur. They remind me of a story I once heard: Two Italians were walking out together on a bright midsummer night.

One looked up to the heavens, thick with innumerable stars, and exclaimed: "O, that I had a farm as spacious as the heavens; that would be an estate worth having." His companion exclaimed: "O, that I had a herd as numerous as the stars above." "Well," said the other, "in the name of heaven, what would you do with such an enormous herd?" "Why, said he, "I would turn them on to your farm." (Laughter.) "You would, aye," sneered the other. "Yes, what else could I do with them?" Upon that they quarreled and fought for an hour. (Great laughter.) Now, it does seem to me that we are about to make out just such a moonshine sort of case. (Continued laughter.)

But it is said Mr. Lincoln's election will consummate the dissolution of the Union—that he will not be permitted to take his seat! How is that? If a man is elected to the Legislature by a majority of the people in a fair and legal way, though you voted against him, won't you say he is entitled to his seat? Would you not consider the power very arbitrary that would undertake to keep him out of his office? You have a right to elect him or anybody else; and, if a man is constitutionally elected President of the United States, shall a minority of the people start up and say, "We will make a revolution; this man shall not be President of the United States; we will by force of arms resist it and drive him out?" Is not that a destruction of all government? The majority must of necessity rule in all republics, and if you do not like the law of the majority, set aside all free government, and go to some place where you will have no elections, where hereditary rulers shall take the place of your elective government. Who will say that if Mr. Lincoln or anybody else is constitutionally elected to the Chief Magistracy he shall not take his seat? Have we come to this? If so, let us change the whole government, and let the minority rule, though even then would not the majority men object to the election of a man by the minority?

The Constitution provided that the term of the President should be comparatively short—but four years—thinking that now and then a dangerous man might be elected, but that he could not, with all the guards that Congress set up around him, in the short space of four years, do much to undermine and destroy the liberties of the people. Shall we now introduce the principle of anarchy, and say the man elected who does not please us (the minority) shall not take his seat? Would not there be time, when he misgoverns, to call him to account, according to the constitutional forms provided for such cases?

It is upon great principles that governments depend, and these great principles must bear a relationship to you. They must be recognized or you have no government at all—nothing but anarchy.

If you expect your government to be perfect and glide on without disturbance, you will be deceived. You must expect occasionally to have your mal-administration and bad government. But if this government in the main advances your social condition, secures your peace, adds to your greatness, it is a good government; and

especially, above all things, if it shall preserve your liberties and your rights, it is a government worthy of your support and protection. (Applause.)

Now, my fellow-citizens, I owe you my thanks for your attention to my desultory remarks. And you, ladies, I am glad to see mingle in counsel, and, while securing order and decorum by your presence, add the purity of sentiment which lovely woman must ever inspire. (Applause.) In your hands rest great interests. If you cannot be Presidents, your sons and your brothers can be; and, at last, whether in or out of office, you govern us all. (Great applause.)

I have only to say once more, gentlemen, that you have but a simple task to perform. Yet it is a task for men. It is a task which requires courage, which requires independence. It is to take care of the Union, the Constitution, and the Laws. Take care of these, and be assured they will take care of you. Your safety lies in the performance of that one little act.

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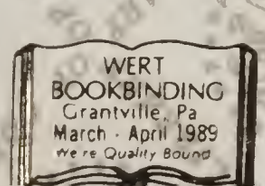
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